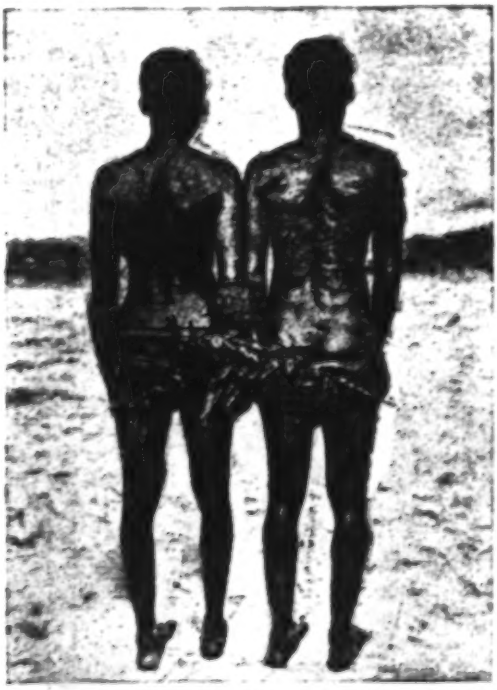
reserved to the Mfumu. The large royal knife, encased in a sheath, hung from a brass chain worn diagonally over the shoulder, and Kakua [187] never parted with his great bow and his quiver of arrows with large iron heads. 643 293 301



[304 301 535]

Fig. 109. Dancing Costume of the Yaelima-Bokala of the Wumbuli Region. Tattooing on the Back.

During dances and ceremonies the women attach the most unusual objects around their waists, often large bushy branches. Among the Ipanga and Batitu, as well as in the region of Wumbuli and Dekese, betrothal and wedding dances are executed in special attire, heavily bedecked with beads and cowries. 292 301 535

These ornaments are not at all consistent. They vary according to taste and the whims and means of the natives, but certain parts of the dress costume worn by the betrothed couple at the dances celebrating the engagement seem to have a special meaning, to which we shall return later.

518 shame of obscenities. They say: bìekí nsónvi éá bitóli ń'kómoto.
684 Bómoto ndé ndota (itúfá) "A woman is a ndota snake. Just as that
834 reptile twists through the grass and rolls up as soon as it sees a man approaching, so a woman finds it difficult to endure any obscenity."

The ideal way to be sure whether an expression is actually considered indecent is to check whether it may be used in the presence of a close relative, for a Nkundó never utters an obscenity in front of such a person.

195 Among the Nkundó, as in Europe, certain indelicate exclama-
578 tions are so deeply rooted that they seem to have lost their original
834 meaning, that is, most of the population no longer thinks of it at all. That a few more serious and modest individuals are still aware of it is apparent from the way they change the pronounciation of the terms in question.

Licentious expressions are never considered indecent and shock no one when they are uttered in a group or during group activities.
[571] Such activities include communal fishing and hunting expeditions, [61] drinking parties, dances, funerals, and -- at the present time -- communal work on a road, a resthouse, etc.

Thus we see that in these matters there is a remarkable discretion side by side with a certain degree of tolerance, which may be carried quite far. Licentious remarks are not condemned in themselves, but only because of fortuitous circumstances, so we see that the Nkundó do not consider them from a moral point of view, as we do, but from a social one. But the fact that those are precisely the words which can become indecent and socially bad shows that the native sees in their content something shocking, shameful, some quality likely to give offense. The freedom exercised in certain cases does not alter this general conclusion but simply gives evidence of he inclinations of a passionate nature.

3. Dances

535 Nkundó dances change periodically, as is the fashion in Europe. Old dances are given up after a time and are replaced by others which are newly invented or recently introduced. The dances fashionable at the present time came from the Besongó, who are by

535 far the most inventive tribe. All the dances have two distinguishable parts: the dance strictly speaking and the finale or ikɗeyo. The latter consists of acrobatic exhibitions or a theatrical performance. It varies with each performance and sometimes goes beyond the limits of decency, especially in certain scenes of the women's dances. Here everything depends on the attitude of the actors and spectators.

535 786 [553] The words sung are usually proper. Passages that may be less so occur only exceptionally. The exclamations of some of the male or female dancers, but mostly those of the audience when the intensity of the performance reaches a climax, are somewhat less innocent. Thus this climax [62] is the weak spot morally speaking. This is true especially of the dances performed by the women who, led on by their passion and encouraged by the cheering and applause of the spectators, make provocative movements (bitɛ́kɔ́, bembɔ́njo). A European will see nothing wrong, but the native knows the gestures and their meaning. The spectators then applaud with even greater enthusiasm, either because of sexual feelings or out of aesthetic enjoyment, for to them these movements are beautiful. All the artistic dances for women which are the fashion at the present time contain a similar phase of exaggerated excitement. It is therefore understandable that in the past the elders strictly forbade children and adolescents to attend these dances.

[582] After what has just been said, no one will be astonished to hear that these great dances are often the cause of adultery and divorce. And to a limited extent the same can be said for the men's dances, for masculine beauty is exhibited in an enticing manner.

533 535 The rhythmic motions which sometimes accompany singing during drinking parties cannot really be called dances; nothing shocking is implied by them and the words of the songs are seldom improper. Salacious songs are rarely sung in the course of daily living, but they are never omitted from funeral ceremonies.

535 17 61 Up to now we have spoken of artistic dances, which are always very popular. They were -- and are -- reserved for certain special occasions. For ordinary circumstances the Nkundɔ́ have a few little entertaining dances which have nothing at all in common with the dance as such. They are more like games. The lyrics of the songs

535 177 831 may be ribald, but this occurs rather rarely. However, at the present time, they are often actually obscene -- especially since "European-style" dancing has been introduced, and more particularly in the centers, small and large, and among those who have come under [63] its influence. This kind of dancing for amusement is chiefly practiced by young people.

To the credit of morality it should be noted that mixed dancing is unknown to strictly native ways. It occurs in the centers (in the form of the mixed bofenya or the balinga, grotesque imitations of European dances) but is spreading -- and rapidly -- to the villages of the interior. The second variety especially raises havoc, for it has a deleterious influence on morality. It has been the cause of a number of cases of adultery, divorce, palavers, and quarrels, and has been forbidden by certain chiefs and headmen, who would like to be able to severely punish anyone who dances it.

Conclusion

834 The data presented in the foregoing section forces us to conclude that sexual modesty does exist among the Nkundó. The wearing of clothing, the various prohibitions, the attitude of the older and wiser members of the community show that they experience this feeling. It is the same here as elsewhere. In certain areas it is even carried to an extreme. The exceptions should be attributed to individual deviations; and because of the reactions they provoke, they even provide conclusive evidence. The general laxity which may be observed on some special occasions does not provide material for a serious objection against the existence of modesty. Yet it is difficult to determine the reason for such an attitude which seems to contradict the rest of our data. Should it be interpreted as a yielding to human weakness, or seen as a weakening of public morality? Or is it not rather because these special circumstances make an unfavorable interpretation of such actions impossible? An allusion made in public, in a group, [64] does not have the same significance as that same allusion may have between two people, where it implies a suspicious intimacy.

842 differences can be found here, although they are less apparent to
855 a European observer since we usually approach the natives as a
152 group and our contact with them is often too impersonal.

2. Abortion

947 A great enemy of maternal love is the practice of abortion, which has always been known to the Nkundó. Here we cannot describe all the prescriptions used for that purpose. It will be sufficient to enumerate the reasons for which they have recourse to this practice. They are as follows:

1) A woman's lasciviousness: the procreation and subsequent care of a child to some extent prevent the indulging in carnal pleasures. Formerly this cause of abortion was nonexistent or very [178] rare. Needless to say, it has become more common, especially in the centers where it is constantly on the increase and where, in addition, occasional or regular "housekeepers" learn new means of sterilization and abortion.

2) A woman's antipathy or persistent anger toward her husband may encourage her to prevent conception or destroy its effect.

3) An excessive weakening of the mother's organism caused by a large number of conceptions and childbirths at too short intervals.

4) The encumberance and the difficulty of watching, carrying, and taking care of many small children -- bálota bokekesano [467] [535] wá bána nsátélá nsátélá. This reason is especially important for well-known dancers.

It goes without saying that several of these motives may be combined in the same person. For instance, I knew of a woman who aborted at the time of her eighth child. Her recurrent pregnancies, together with continuous work, had greatly reduced her strength. A palaver with her husband was the last straw; she decided to get rid of the fruit she carried in her body.

Outside of these exceptions the natives of this country ardently desire their own continuation through a large number of progeny. (1)

[184]

1. The same is not true elsewhere. Examples to that effect are cited from regions that are

845 [202] The event is announced by the usual signal, but the signal is doubled or, if the children are of different sexes, the signal for each sex is given once. It is followed by the dance beat: two [535] or three long and two short.

845 778 The next day the father's relatives go outside the village, preferably to a crossroads. On each side they plant a stalk of lokɔ́kɔ́lɔ́kɔ́. All around the stalk they spread a little heap of small branches and various leaves called jŭké. It is a sign and a place of benediction and good fortune. Each passer-by stops, picks two leaves, places one on each pile, spits on it, and says swá.(2) Then

2. Onomatopoeia for "spit."

they clap hands and twice sing out, yelí yeye. Such behavior brings the benediction of the twins upon a person's journey, his undertakings, his marriage. The umbilical cord as well as the placenta and membrane are buried under the heap.

845 302 [386] Every morning the mother and father draw two stripes with kaolin on the middle of their foreheads and on their arms, above and below the elbow. They do the same to the twins. (3) They

3. Sometimes a double stripe is added at the temples The kaolin may be used pure or mixed with the red paint called ngɔ́la.

continue doing so until the child is weaned. If after that time one of the children falls ill, they begin again treating him in this manner until he is cured, taking care not to omit his brother, lest he too fall ill. For while these designs are signs of joy, they are [751] above all a prophylactic measure against children's fever (ikŭtswáki), [502] called wăsanyi when it occurs in twins or in a child following them, and manifests itself chiefly by tumors of the head and face.

845 551 Twins are invariably called Mbóyɔ́ and Bokétu, names given to the first born and the second respectively, whatever their sex. The Bombwanja (like the Ekonda) use the names Mbɔ́ɔ́ and Mpia, respectively. The mother takes the name of Ămbá.

This funeral drumming is kept up for a long time, off and on for days, and is very stirring in its rhythm. While it is going on, the elders congregate in an *ekunga*. They fast and have nothing to do with their wives during this time. The *ekopo* is mourning, and the *molombo* may be likewise mourning, but for the others it is a time of rejoicing, and also of the relaxing of moral restraints. It is an occasion for dancing by both Batwa and 'freemen', the former regarding this as a time for special rejoicing, for the *nkumu* was their master and now he is dead they are no longer under restraint. They are free to take any of their master's goods and even to snatch blankets off the corpse. Men and women do not dance together; the women, taking some of their husbands' weapons, go off in one direction, and the men, arrayed in finery, dance at the other end of the village.

While the *nkumu* is still unburied and the drumming is going on, the *molombo* look for a successor among the *ekopo*. Often this man will, as we have seen, have already been designated. The *molombo*, Batwa, and others in the village make up a party, and attired in war finery go off with their weapons as though after a man they wished to kill. As they go they sing:

Nkumbe w'oopilita elimbo
W'e elale we nko?
Hawk, thou hast destroyed the nest,
Where art thou going to sleep?

Before catching the real successor they catch one or another in fun, singing this song. The man of course refuses to be *nkumu*, and the point of the song is that because of his refusal the *ekopo* no longer fulfils its function of supplying the *molombo* with *nkumu* and therefore ceases to be of any use to them. If this man by refusing thus destroys the family nest, where will they sleep?

Finally, after this fun, the real successor is caught, his face daubed with black, and the group sing:

Bala lesw-os, lusala akula.
The cunning animal is hiding, reveal the tortoise.

Thus the new *nkumu*, like a cunning animal, is hiding, but when discovered, like the tortoise, he will not try to run away. The whole group conducts the new *nkumu* to the *ipasa* and sits all night guarding him. Earlier on the day of the actual interment of the dead *nkumu*, the new one is installed with ceremonies as already described.

On the day the *nkumu* dies his people scatter to other villages to look for slaves for the executions on the day of the burial. Slave-owners or husbands of unwanted wives ask quietly how much money there is for the man or woman, accept the agreed amount, and tell the buyers to go quietly and catch the slave or wife before anything is suspected and an escape is made. In this connexion we may note two classes of wives, *bopika* and *iboto*. A third class, *boombo*, acquired by the payment of a very small bride price, was not nearly as common formerly as at present and may be passed by. A *bopika* was a slave wife acquired by capture in war or stolen. If loved by her husband she will take her place practically on an equality with the members of the village, but she may be killed, for she is her husband's possession, 'his money' is the native expression. An *iboto* is a wife for whom a very high bride price has been paid, obliging her family to give wives to the other family in perpetuity, supplying

601 Bonsonga and etúká are terms used for kinship groups of
621 ranks B, C, and D, but occasionally they may also refer to
614 [192] the groups listed under A and, in addition, to the local groups which in size approximately correspond to the kinship units mentioned above. Etúká is the term used for the oil palm grove and for a certain kind of termite hill; apparently it is used for local groups more frequently than the term bonsonga.

[571] Another term whose meaning varies is ekíndá. This word
[535] designates, first of all, a dance group, a corps de ballet, and also the social unit which sends such a joint dance troupe to dance festivals.

Esé also has strong local connotations. It is usually identical with what we call a village, but frequently units which are larger or smaller than a village are designated as esé. Very large groups, tribes and even larger units, are called bonanga.

614 As a criterion for placing the individual groups within a certain rank, one or several functions have been chosen in each case. The groups of the individual ranks are described below relative to their functions. On the subject of groups it should be added that in general they do not differ from each other in certain traits. All groups of all ranks are kinship units of patrilineal descent. They consider themselves descendants of one ancestor. No continuous and complete genealogy which can be traced back to the original ancestor is known. The genealogy of the entire group of the Bakonda is shown in Diagram 1.

In Isangi two of the ancestors of the groups of rank D are brothers, the third is the brother of their father. A D-group (Ngelé) includes, in addition, the descendants of an illegitimate child of the paternal sister of the ancestor. These offspring form the C-group, Nsambásílá.

There is a gap between this ancient genealogy and the known ancestors from the recent past. In contrast with that of the neighboring Bokóté [Bokete] (see, for example, Boelaert, "Les Bongili"), the genealogical memory of the Ekonda is weak. [173] It does not reach back to the ancestor of the group of rank A. In this connection we must take into account the fact that a group

each other to employ their own messengers. When the messenger of settlement II arrives here, he first calls on the messenger of the nuclear kinship group Bosóbé (No. 19) and then to Impfnga (No. 26). The messenger from Bosóbé calls on his relatives in settlement VI, who are the nuclear kinship group Mbelo-Mmuna (No. 22), while the messenger from Impfnga-Ndongó formerly had to call on the group Bommambo which is now extinct.

Settlement V consisted of three different groups. Bolíma, the group of the father, had its own messenger; however, he only received the messages without having to pass them on, which is also the case with all these last groups of the village. Both neighbors had their own messenger. The messenger from settlement I called on the nuclear kinship group Bolesangi, his relatives; the messenger from settlement III went to his relatives of the nuclear kinship group Ituli.

There were also two messengers in the last hamlet, but reports on this subject are insufficient since the nuclear kinship group Bommambo has been extinct for a long time.

All the settlements just mentioned have a common characteristic: formerly, at important dance festivals, their young men performed together in one joint corps de ballet. The population was decimated as a result of the rigors of [201] the occupation period and also as a result of the population movement into the cities. Consequently, there are not enough young people any more, and I with II, III with IV, and V with VI act together. Thus, in each case we find Ngelé and Nkoto united in one ballet. Although these groups have also been scattered as a result of the new settlement pattern (next to the highway), the old organizational structure has been preserved, and the young people do not hesitate to walk the long distance to the practice field every day so they can dance in the old groupings.

All of Isangi, all three kinship groups, have one common village chief, the Nkúmú, with an iyolo nsíka who gets the meetings started, and a village court with its judges. There are other groups which correspond to Isangi (31), but have more than one

31. See Müller, Fürstentum, pp. 73 ff., 76 ff., 133 f.